

Case 2931

Proposed conservation of nine specific names of southern Afrotropical birds which are junior synonyms

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Abstract. The purpose of this application is to conserve nine widely used specific names of southern Afrotropical birds which are threatened by unused senior synonyms, eight of which were published in the *Encyclopaedia Londinensis* (1795–1829) edited by John Wilkes. The ninth unused name was published by C.J. Temminck (1807) in his *Catalogue systématique du cabinet d'ornithologie*.

1. As a result of Rookmaaker's (1989) work on the early history of the zoological exploration of southern Africa, nine specific names of southern Afrotropical birds in widespread use in the primary and more popular literatures were found to be antedated by long-overlooked synonyms. Eight of these names were published in the *Encyclopaedia Londinensis* (1795–1829) 'compiled, digested and arranged' in 24 volumes by John Wilkes. It appears (Rookmaaker, 1989) that Wilkes died in 1811; a note at the end of vol. 10 of the *Encyclopaedia Londinensis* says that the publishers had all the material necessary for completion of the work. There is no evidence as to the identity of the contributors, although Cassin (1867) and Sherborn (1922–1932) attributed the articles on birds to Wilkes in his capacity as editor. The ninth specific name was published by Temminck (1807, p. 85) for 'Le Nabirop, ou etourneau cuivré d'Afrique, Vaill. Ois. d'Af. v. 2, pl. 89'; Temminck's specimen was probably presented to him by François Levaillant (Rookmaaker, 1989, p. 198).

2. Most professional workers are now totally opposed to changing names unnecessarily, especially in cases such as the present where the recently discovered names have remained essentially ignored since 1820. Reference to the Wilkes names was made by the American worker John Cassin (1867) but his findings seem to have been ignored until the British workers Gregory Mathews & Tom Iredale (1921, p. 143) mentioned two of the names: *Motacilla fimbriata* Wilkes, 1817 (p. 100), a junior synonym of *Stipiturus malachurus* Shaw, 1798, and *M. tractrac* Wilkes, 1817 (p. 89), a senior synonym of *Oenanthe cinerea* Vieillot, 1818. Their paper resulted in the universal adoption of *M. tractrac* (now *Cercomela tractrac*; see Roberts, 1922, p. 231 and Sclater, 1930, p. 456). Curiously, Roberts (1924, p. 174) attributed the specific name to Boie instead of Wilkes, but without explanation.

3. We (Clancey & Brooke, 1990, p. 144) proposed the acceptance of Wilkes's authorship of two specific names widely used in the 20th century but normally attributed to later authors: those of *Motacilla familiaris* Wilkes, 1817 (p. 86), now *Cercomela familiaris*, and of *M. formicivora* Wilkes, 1817 (p. 88), now *Oenanthe formicivora*. The long acceptance of *M. tractrac* Wilkes, 1817 is the reason why we have not sought the suppression of the *Encyclopaedia Londinensis* for the purposes of zoological nomenclature. Also, we are quite unaware of what the effects of such a suppression might be on the nomenclature of groups other than African birds.

4. The unused senior synonyms in the list below are threats to long-established names and we can see no advantages in using them to replace those in general use.

Senior synonym

Sturnus nabirop Temminck, 1807,
p. 85

Alauda rostro-crasso Wilkes,
[1796], p. 235

Alauda percutiens Wilkes,
[1796], p. 236

Motacilla citrina Wilkes, 1817,
p. 78

Motacilla viridis Wilkes, 1817,
p. 80

Motacilla arenarea Wilkes, 1817,
p. 85

Motacilla montana Wilkes, 1817,
p. 89

Motacilla tcheric Wilkes, 1817,
p. 94

Oriolus africanus Wilkes, 1820,
p. 740

Junior synonym in use

Lamprotornis nitens
phoenicopterus Swainson,
[1837], p. 360

Galerida magnirostris
(Stephens, 1826), p. 26

Mirafrapa apiata (Vieillot,
1816), p. 342

Prinia flavicans (Vieillot,
[1820]), p. 438

Camaroptera brachyura (Vieillot,
[1820]), p. 459

Motacilla aguimp Temminck
[1820], p. lxxviii

Oenanthe monticola Vieillot,
1818, p. 434

Zosterops pallidus

Swainson, [1837], p. 294

Oriolus larvatus Lichtenstein,
1823, p. 20

5. All the Wilkes names except *M. viridis* are recorded in Sherborn's *Index Animalium*, where however *arenarea* and *tcheric* are spelled as *arenaria* and *teheric*. Sherborn did not record *Sturnus nabirop* Temminck, 1807, although he did list the nearly homonymous *S. nabouroup* Daudin, 1800 (p. 308). Temminck (1807, pp. 85, 87) applied his own name *S. nabirop* and Daudin's *S. nabouroup* to different species, illustrated by Levaillant (1799) on pls. 89 and 91 with the vernacular names 'le nabirop' and 'le nabouroup' of Hottentot origin.

6. The Commission Secretariat holds a list of 56 primary literature references (mostly checklists and faunal works) published in the last 50 years in which the nine names proposed by Temminck and Wilkes do not appear but which illustrate usage of their junior synonyms. An examination of the 20th century periodical and more popular literature would produce a list of many hundreds of citations in support of current usage, and demonstrate lack of awareness of the nine names of Temminck and Wilkes. The case meets the *prima facie* criteria for conservation of names given in Article 79c of the Code.

7. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the following specific names for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy:
 - (a) *nabirop* Temminck, 1807, as published in the binomen *Sturnus nabirop*;
 - (b) *rostrocrasso* Wilkes, [1796], as published in the binomen *Alauda rostrocrasso*;
 - (c) *percutiens* Wilkes, [1796], as published in the binomen *Alauda percutiens*;
 - (d) *citrinus* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla citrinus*;
 - (e) *viridis* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla viridis*;
 - (f) *arenarea* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla arenarea*;
 - (g) *montana* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla montana*;
 - (h) *tcheric* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla tcheric*;
 - (i) *africanus* Wilkes, 1820, as published in the binomen *Oriolus africanus*;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
 - (a) *phoenicopterus* Swainson, [1837], as published in the binomen *Lamprotornis phoenicopterus*;
 - (b) *magnirostris* Stephens, 1826, as published in the binomen *Alauda magnirostris*;
 - (c) *apiata* Vieillot, 1816, as published in the binomen *Alauda apiata*;
 - (d) *flavicans* Vieillot, [1820], as published in the binomen *Sylvia flavicans*;
 - (e) *brachyura* Vieillot, [1820], as published in the binomen *Sylvia brachyura*;
 - (f) *aguimp* Temminck, [1820], as published in the binomen *Motacilla aguimp*;
 - (g) *monticola* Vieillot, 1818, as published in the binomen *Oenanthe monticola*;
 - (h) *pallidus* Swainson, [1837], as published in the binomen *Zosterops pallidus*;
 - (i) *larvatus* Lichtenstein, 1823, as published in the binomen *Oriolus larvatus*;
- (3) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
 - (a) *nabirop* Temminck, 1807, as published in the binomen *Sturnus nabirop* and as suppressed in (1)(a) above;
 - (b) *rostrocrasso* Wilkes, [1796], as published in the binomen *Alauda rostrocrasso* and as suppressed in (1)(b) above;
 - (c) *percutiens* Wilkes, [1796], as published in the binomen *Alauda percutiens* and as suppressed in (1)(c) above;
 - (d) *citrinus* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla citrinus* and as suppressed in (1)(d) above;
 - (e) *viridis* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla viridis* and as suppressed in (1)(e) above;
 - (f) *arenarea* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla arenarea* and as suppressed in (1)(f) above;
 - (g) *montana* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla montana* and as suppressed in (1)(g) above;
 - (h) *tcheric* Wilkes, 1817, as published in the binomen *Motacilla tcheric* and as suppressed in (1)(h) above;
 - (i) *africanus* Wilkes, 1820, as published in the binomen *Oriolus africanus* and as suppressed in (1)(i) above.

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